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Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities

Report of the Economic and Social Council NGO Forum

Millennium Development Goals: our commitments

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Report of the Economic and Social Council NGO Forum

Millennium Development Goals: our commitments

I. Abstract:

The ECOSOC NGO Forum was successfully held on 10 March 2005 in New York with participation from over 150 attendees, including members of the NGO community, State Delegations, UN staff and members of the private sector and academia. Presentations and addresses were made by several representatives and the Forum concluded with concrete recommendations to help empower and inspire the global NGO community, Governments, the private sector and the United Nations to move ahead with concrete actions in achieving the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The forum was covered by UNTV and broadcast live through a **web-cast** that can be found at the following web address: **http://www.un.org/webcast/2005.html** under the archive portion for 10 March 2005

II. Introduction:

In preparation for the High Level Segment of ECOSOC, a NGO/Civil Society Forum was held in New York on 10 March 2005 to enhance contributions to the ECOSOC HLS 2005 Theme: "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities."

The year 2005 is very significant to the United Nations and the world, as it marks the +5 Review of the MDGs and the 60th Anniversary of the Organization. As the Organization begins its important review process, several reports have been released, including the Millennium Project Report, the outcome of the Eminent Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and the Secretary-General's Report on cooperation with Civil Society, that all call upon the development of partnerships with NGOs and the engagement of civil society in the worldwide campaign to implement and achieve the ambitious Millennium Declaration. Indeed progress towards the MDGs has been lacking in many areas and in specific sectors, but this Forum encouraged all stakeholders to move ahead with civil society and the NGO community, using their unique experiences in the field and collective concrete action in order to tackle the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the next ten years.

The Forum was organized by UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO-Section/UNDESA in cooperation with the Conference of NGOs (CONGO), NGO/DPI, the World Federation of UN Associations (WFUNA) and the Global Youth Action Network. UN staff, NGO representatives and members of the private sector and academia participated in the meeting. Some Delegations representing members of ECOSOC also attended the Forum as observers. Most notable among them was Ambassador Francis Lorenzo of the Dominican Republic. His presence indicated the importance states are now attributing to the strengthened contribution of NGOs to the work of ECOSOC and the United Nations at large. The Forum was moderated by **Ms. Hanifa Mezoui**, Chief of the NGO-Section/UNDESA, who emphasized the role of civil society in reaching the MDGs in partnership with the Governments and the United Nations, as well as highlighted the work of UN-NGO-IRENE.

III. Welcoming Remarks:

Introductory remarks by **H.E. Ambassador Munir Akram**, President of ECOSOC, began with the acknowledgment and welcoming of everyone to the NGO/Civil Society Forum. He pointed out the importance of the ECOSOC High Level Segment Theme relating to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and highlighted the evolving and outstanding relationship between the United Nations and NGOs by underlining their respective contributions to social and economic development. More recently the NGO role

has been increasingly effective in the policy-making process of the Organization – particularly in the economic and social fields. In contrast to the low participation of NGOs a decade ago, this year an unprecedented involvement is expected: approximately 30 NGOs and 5 coalition statements, with some on behalf of several hundred signatory NGOs, will be submitted to the High-Level Segment. Ambassador Akram also emphasized the need for a strengthened partnership between NGOs in the North and the South. In opening the floor, the Ambassador invited all the participants to consider how to better use ECOSOC as a tool to make a real impact on the global Millennium campaign to eradicate poverty by 2015, as outlined in the universally agreed upon Millennium Declaration.

For **Mr. Sarbuland Khan**, Director of Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination/UNDESA, "today's forum is a manifestation of something that is often forgotten. The charter begins with the phrase "We the People... and most of the time the United Nations is a manifestation of governments talking to each other." But today's forum reminds us that the United Nations is not only about governments, it is also about "we the people." He spoke about the role of state, civil society and the private sector in becoming partners. He voiced his concern that the MDGs would not be achieved by 2015 unless there are changes in development. That includes shifts in the policies and governance of developing countries so that they can generate sustainable economic growth and development for themselves. Such policy shifts have led to many success stories and advancements throughout Southeast Asia, which includes Mr. Khan's native country of Pakistan, where the rural poor are engaged and their tremendously entrepreneurial and creative energies are utilized in national, regional and local development efforts. By expanding ODA (developing aid), improving the policies of developing countries and harmonizing civil society, the MDGs will not only be achieved but will be exceeded. Mr. Khan reminded the attendees that some of the goals have been exceeded and attributed this success to people coming together and building partnerships, but we need to continue encouraging all stakeholders to bring about the kind of synergy that is necessary to create a new dimension of partnership.

IV. Keynote Address by Ms. Eveline Herfkens:

Ms. Eveline Herfkens of the United Nations Millennium Campaign stated that the world today is off track towards achieving the MDGs and running out of time as the year 2015 is fast approaching; we will not be able to achieve the MDGs by the target date unless we reevaluate our approach and mobilize worldwide. On an encouraging note, the goals are indeed achievable; the world community knows what needs to be done and has the resources that are necessary to achieve commitments, but promises must be kept. Some of the goals are on track, highlighting several success stories from the sub-Saharan Africa region where Governments are keeping their promises and mobilizing political will, but a significant gap still exists between the rhetoric and actions of Governments worldwide: "people show up, make great speeches and then leave for home to business as usual." Ms. Herfkens encouraged everyone in the Forum to mobilize and lobby their leaders, encouraging attendees "to go home and tell their Governments that promises were made and you want to see those promises kept."

Ms. Herfkens then proceeded to suggest proactive ways to take action, such as lobbying the Governments of developed countries to fulfill their promise of devoting 0.7% of their GNP to development aid. She mentioned the need for millennium development goal number eight to be specified, saying "we need deadlines, we need targets and we need commitments." She went on to express that we must create opportunities and not destroy them. In addition to aid increases, developed countries need to also eliminate harmful trade barriers and lessen production subsidies, especially in agriculture, so as to open markets to developing and impoverished populations worldwide. The lobbying and civil society activities should also be encouraged and organized in developing countries so that their respective Governments are held accountable and their budgets transparent, ultimately preventing corruption and assuring that money is being spent on primary education and community development initiatives. Ms. Herfkens said "it is thanks to the civil society that the great conferences of the United Nations led to agreement on all these issues." She reiterated that the goals will only be achieved

together with the support, energy and expertise of civil society, and in conclusion, encouraged all people to mobilize now and "bother your governments," reminding them that they promised to "spare no effort" in the campaign to implement the MDGs. We know the goals can be achieved, please refuse to miss this opportunity.

V. Speakers:

1. Ms. Renate Bloem

Ms. Renate Bloem, President of CONGO, expressing her pleasure of having the privilege to meet at this timely Forum within the context of the CONGO Board meeting, reaffirmed the spirit of the Millennium Declaration. She especially expressed on behalf of CONGO Board members their commitments to human rights, democratic governance and their reiteration of the values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, and respect for nature and shared responsibility. It was heartening to hear that the same message and language was coming now from high UN Officials and that partnerships with civil society was seen as essential in achieving the MDGs. This would help to mobilize wider circles of civil society who still feel alienated from the MDG Campaign. Underlining that CONGO is interconnected with many MDG/NGO activities, she made reference to the CONGO organized Civil Society Forums in Asia (2002 and 2004) and Latin America (2004) and the upcoming African Forum in 2005, all of which had strongly contributed to the awareness raising of the MDGs and mobilization for the Campaign. CONGO had also formed with the DPI NGO Community and other NGOs the Millennium+5 Network to impact the Millennium Summit. She recognized that while working to influence and change things from inside the UN system it was also necessary to listen to and build bridges to complimentary coalitions who try to influence the Millennium agenda from outside.

2. Ms. Joan Levy and Mr. Joseph Donnelly

Ms. Joan Levy, Chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, started off by saying that over 50% of the DPI/NGOs are also in consultative status with ECOSOC, indicating the partnership opportunities between the respective UN agencies and the NGOs. Ms. Levy primarily outlined the annual DPI/NGO conference held every September in collaboration with several NGOs. Each year the planning committee decides on a theme; last year, the planning committee agreed upon a theme addressing the MDGs. In 2003, the Secretary-General, UN attendees, 1800 NGOs from 60 countries and the private sector all gathered together and it was decided that an interactive website should be developed and in 2004 was expanded to include English, Spanish, and French. This was established in an attempt for NGOs all over the world to communicate and participate in the UN conference, including the upcoming civil society participation during the 2005 General Assembly Summit and +5 Review of the MDGs. So far, the project has been very successful. **Mr. Joseph Donnelly**, Chairman of 58th Annual DPI Conference spoke immediately after Joan Levy announcing the title of this year's Conference which is "Our Challenge: Voices for Peace, Partnerships and Renewal." He indicated that he was inspired to act towards the MDG campaign by facilitating NGO interaction and global collaboration. He said that NGOs would work collaboratively with the United Nations towards achieving the MDGs and harmonizing the efforts. The DPI Conference provides the opportunity for unprecedented networking and partnership development. Mr. Donelly closed by sharing a quote from the World Social Forum that he had heard from a Dutch NGO: "We are grateful for the apples. We are more grateful for the apple trees and apple orchards, so we can eat in 2015."

3. Ms. Pera Wells

Ms. Pera Wells, Deputy Secretary-General of WFUNA, recalled that in 2000 there had been a Millennium Forum for NGOs to meet together before the Millennium Summit. However this year, in preparation for the 5 year review, NGOs were not organizing one major event – instead CONGO and NGO-DPI Executive Committee together with other networks had set up the Millennium +5 NGO network to share information and

hold a series of events in conjunction with meetings of ECOSOC and its Commissions (notably on Social Development, Status of Women, Human Rights and Sustainable Development). She encouraged everyone to participate in NGO preparations for the General Assembly Hearings with Civil Society, to be held 23-24 June. She mentioned that WFUNA and the North/South Institute had produced their fourth annual "We the Peoples" report on civil society engagement with the MDGs – and that an executive summary of the 2005 report was available. Among the recommendations that WFUNA supported was the idea that ECOSOC should be transformed into a development cooperation forum. This reform would be significant and beneficial to NGOs that have achieved consultative status with ECOSOC and could help develop partnerships to achieve the MDGs.

4. Ms. Najet Karaborni

Ms. Najet Karaborni, Senior Advisor/UNDESA and Project Coordinator of UN-NGO IRENE/NGO-Section, made a PowerPoint presentation on UN-NGO-IRENE activities in contribution to the ECOSOC High-Level Segment and the 2005 United Nations work of the +5 Review of the MDGs. Several partnership activities included NGO surveys, preparatory global, regional, sub-regional and national meetings for the ECOSOC substantive session and humanitarian mission support. Four NGO surveys were developed, including a NGO survey on Poverty Eradication and the MDGs with WFUNA, an NGO survey on MDGs conducted by the NGO-Section, a survey on MDGs, ICT and Information Society conducted with ATM (UN-NGO-IRENE/Africa Coordinator), and the Annual WFUNA People Surveys on MDGs. Ms. Karaborni also outlined partnership work in preparation, conduct and follow-up to The World Family Summit in China in collaboration with the World Family Organization, concluding with the ratification by over 300 participants of the comprehensive Sanya Declaration, an International Seminar in January 2005 (Tunisia) with ATUDE, a NGO/Civil Society Forum on MDGs, ICT and Inclusive Information Society for All to be held in April 2005 (Tunisia), and the International Conference on Gender Mainstreaming and the MDGs with APWA in March 2005 (Islamabad, Pakistan). Support was also provided to recent humanitarian missions in South-Asia and NGOs contributing efforts in the tsunami relief zone. She also reminded the participants of the UN-NGO-IRENE newsletter and website that facilitated partnership development and communication. Ms. Karaborni concluded by underlining the need and impact of more concrete proposals to move forward and efficiently improve the lives of the poor.

5. Mr. Luis Davila Ortega

Mr. Luis Davila Ortega, representative of the NGO Global Youth Action Network, stated that the MDGs are for the benefit of youth and will assure the rising generation a secure and peaceful future, but reiterated that youth need to be engaged and informed. Mr. Ortega then proceeded to outline the Global Youth Action Network's strategy: The first step is to analyze and inform youth by getting the concrete facts on the MDGs, sharing the information and informing youth on what the MDGs mean. Global Youth Action is working towards analyzing youth activities in support of the MDGs. The second step is to inform youth about broader activities of the United Nations, suggesting ways that they can become involved. Thirdly, the NGO is working towards mobilizing youth for action by creating partnerships and trying to ensure that young people are given a responsibility and opportunity. Global Youth Action is trying to impact policy and lobbying organizations and authorities to include youth decision and policy making processes that will inevitably shape their lives.

6. Ambassador Francis Lorenzo

Ambassador Lorenzo of the Dominican Republic indicated in order to achieve the MDGs, political will and strong leadership are required. The Dominican Republic is the only country which has organized a Presidential commission on the MDGs that addresses many issues including fighting corruption, partnership development,

the reduction of hunger and poverty, and the strengthening of good governance practices. The Ambassador emphasized the need to provide children access to meals and fresh water, and the importance of maintaining urban structures so as to prevent the proliferation of slum conditions.

VI. NGO Statements:

1. Droit A l'Energie SOS Futur: Mr. Serge Perez

The NGO representative outlined the importance of energy conservation and usage in sustainable development, explaining that all the MDGs rely on a sustainable supply of energy. International Governments, civil society and private market all have a stake in the success of the MDGs and the responsible usage of energy. These stakeholders need to work towards a cooperative approach to energy maintenance rather than a competitive approach.

2. Mediterranean Council for Burns and Fire Disaster: Ms. Gilda Glasnovich

The NGO representative stated that immigrant women are vulnerable and must not be forgotten in the campaign to achieve the MDGs. In addition to regular prejudices and challenges as women, immigrant women are often not informed of their rights and national laws and consequently are prone to abuse, human rights violations, unemployment and poverty. The international community must assist these marginalized women. The representative presented four concrete suggestions: schools should provide gender-oriented curricula; training, forums and conferences addressing gender-sensitive approaches in health services; mandatory reporting of domestic violence; and the establishment of surveillance systems as measurable indicators of performance.

3. New Humanity: Mr. Joe Klock

The NGO representative spoke of peace and talked about perusing global partnerships, freedom and equality by achieving sisterhood and brotherhood and "living by the golden rule" with love for each other as for ourselves. As it is love that builds peace, the NGO community and civil society must work towards and foster a culture of giving, noting the importance of sisterhood and brotherhood as a tool of partnership development and a vital step towards achieving any goals and development efforts.

4. The Virtue Foundation: Ms. Kim Azzarelli

The NGO representative stated that the Virtue Foundation supports and finances humanitarian medical missions by sending doctors around the world, in order to train local physicians and healthcare professions and provide health services in emergency situations and in impoverished target areas. The representative recalled the NGOs recent humanitarian mission to Cambodia where reconstructive surgical procedures and rehabilitation expertise was provided to acid burn victims.

5. Foundation for Research on Technology Migration and Integration: Mr. Giovanni Bisogni

The NGO representative stated that technology is the key to socioeconomic development. He emphasized that his organization is committed to supporting the idea of using technology for socioeconomic development, to maintain social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability. He pointed out that target 18 of MDG number 8 – to develop a global partnership for development – expresses the need to make the benefits of new technologies available for socioeconomic development, especially information and communication technologies, in cooperation with the private sector.

6. Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (FPSC): Mr. Miguel Perez

The NGO representative indicated that his organization supports the MDGs and the Millennium Declaration, calling upon all stakeholders to focus on capacity building and peace-building while being sensitive to ethnic diversity. FPSC has organized 130 projects that have been completed in cooperation with 32 other NGOs. Between 2001 and 2004, 78 projects were developed and implemented and the NGO was responsible for the project review in addition to providing technical support. The review process included cooperation between involved NGOs and the discussion of actions towards the implementation of the MDG, concluding with the publication of a report.

7. Public Service International (PSI) CONGO Board member: Mr. Alan Leather

The NGO representative and board member indicated that their organization represents four trade unions, hundreds of NGOs and sixty million members, all working to achieve the MDGs and Millennium Declaration in their respective ways. There are a few areas of concern such as funding, minimal political will and the lack of people with skills due to the negative effects of global immigration. The international community, especially NGOS, have to develop quality public services that mobilize local efforts as this is the only way to achieve sustainable development. Finally, the representative offered four recommendations: mobilize public will and action; provide adequate resources; provide training; and lobby Governments to take responsibility (such as fulfilling the promise of 0.7% GNP development aid).

8. Franciscans International: Ms. Florence Deacon

The NGO representative reminded the attendees that the eradication of poverty (MDG 1) is behind schedule and it must be brought to the forefront of all sustainable development efforts. Surveys have shown that poverty is a complex and multi-faceted issue and that there is a lack of resources and support. The concerns for poor rural women need to be addressed. Education is the key to the eradication of poverty; NGOs should work together towards sustainable development at the local level so that the poor will not be forced to spend their lives and energy on basic survival.

9. Central di Ricercae Documentacione Febbraio 74 (CERFE): Ms. Alexandra Olmi

The NGO representative suggested the need for a new model of policy making that is supportive and inclusive while emphasizing the necessity of researched, designed and tested models. The international community must start with the poor because of social urgency and security, and policy making and development efforts must include the concerns of marginalized people, especially youth and the ageing. Finally, the representative emphasized the need for clear quantifiable results.

10. Oasis Open City Foundation (FOCA): Ms. Marillia Bernard

The NGO representative spoke about two of FOCA's recent initiatives that included a recent conference in Portugal addressing Local Agenda 21 and localized development, and a campaign to optimize economic approaches to development in the Amazon region that stressed the importance of partnership development with local authorities and civil society in efforts to achieve the MDGs. The representative also thanked the UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO-Section for support with their recent projects.

11. Peoples Decade for Human Rights Association: Ms. Betty Reardom

The NGO representative recalled a position paper on the MDGs and human rights education that was ratified by over 30 world leaders and reiterated that the MDGs are the basis for human rights learning and that there must be human rights based approaches to development through implementation. The Peoples Decade for

Human Rights Association provides empowerment, knowledge, and critical awareness of human rights and encourages collaboration in human rights learning.

12. Additional Statements and Proposals

In addition, NGO representatives from the following organizations made comprehensive statements and proposals that were reviewed and incorporated into this reports final recommendations: **the All India Women's Education Fund Association, MDG Global Watch, Institute for International Social Development, International Movement ATD Fourth World and the National Association of University Women of Romania.**

VII. Recommendations:

The Forum ended with outstanding recommendations calling for all stakeholders to **"Think Bold, Do-Able with Bold Action"** in order to have **Goals Set - Goals Met.**

The recommendations focused on the following areas:

1. Addressing MDG 8
    a. Partnership Development
        i. Mobilization of civil society at all levels in cooperation with all stakeholders and all sectors, especially in rural areas with marginalized groups.
        ii. Synergy between development actors and harmonization between donors.
        iii. Mobilization and local partnership campaigns to lobby Governments and hold them accountable to their promises, encouraging them to turn goals set into goals met.
        iv. Foster civil society energies with national programs and ODA efforts.
        v. Deepen UN relationships with the NGO community and civil society, especially in regards to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
        vi. Participation and empowerment of people living in extreme poverty (MDG 1) through partnership activities.
    b. Development of clear and transparent indicators, especially for ODA.
2. ODA Development Aid
    a. Encourage and lobby developed countries to devote 0.7% of GNP to international development aid.
    b. Encourage and lobby developed countries to eliminate trade barriers and subsidiaries so as encourage economic opportunities, especially in agriculture, for rural and impoverished people.
    c. Harmonize efforts between aid agencies and economic authorities, including the World Bank and the WTO.
3. Human Rights and Security
    a. Reaffirm the commitment to human rights, democratic governance and values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, and respect for nature and shared responsibility.

b. Assure human rights and security within the framework of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs.

4. Goal 3: Gender Equality and Perspectives

a. More comprehensive approaches to gender with clear indicators for gender perspectives.

b. Include gender in all of the MDGs and not only restricted to Goal 3.

c. Integrating gender principles in all of the MDGs.

5. Goal 7: Environment Sustainability

a. Promoting environmental sustainability through education and good management of natural resources (including soil and water).

6. Goal 1: Poverty Eradication

a. Rural Development

b. Engage and empower people living in poverty and rural areas.

c. Sustainable energy and maintenance of natural resources for poor and rural people.

7. UN Reform

a. ECOSOC to become a "forum for development cooperation" as recommended by the recent Eminent Panel and Report of Threats, Challenges and Change (paragraph 89).

b. Engage civil society and the NGO community in UN reform activities.

8. Implementation of the MDGs

a. Facilitation by Governments with all stakeholders

b. Evaluation Processes

c. All civil society should be integrated into the campaign to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

d. Appeal to ECOSOC to provide assistance to civil society to implement the MDGs through a UN technical cooperation program that will be implemented with the support of UN-NGO-IRENE.

e. MDG Global Watch for partnership

f. Important role of youth

9. ICT for Development

a. Promote ICT as a tool to support socioeconomic development of non-G8 Countries, bridging the digital gap between the North and South, and increase availability to decent and productive work for youth. The initiative's possible denomination could be "One Dollar for Development."

VIII. Closing Remarks

In his closing remarks to the Forum, Mr. Khan shared his deep appreciation to all the participants, acknowledging everyone's unique talents and expertise and indicated that he was impressed by all the

recommendations put forward by the respective NGOs and how they were able to capture "the essence of what needs to be done." Mr. Khan reiterated that the Forums' recommendations would be brought to upcoming ECOSOC roundtable discussions, signifying continued partnership activities with civil society and the NGO community. He encouraged everyone to participate so that the "structure that we build is seen as belonging to you as much as to the United Nations." The goal is to build partnerships in this historic effort that is being made, and I look forward to your continuing engagement in the years to come.

In addition, **Ms. Reneta Bloem**, President of CONGO, once again thanked all the participants and the respective UN agencies for organizing the Forum, reiterating the necessity to have concrete vision and remain steadfast in efforts to fulfill promises. Ms. Bloem reminded the participants that the United Nations "is the house we all belong to" and called upon civil society and the NGO community to develop partnerships with the Organization.